gm 02-1241

GOVDOC
MB1016
BRA
02/16

NORTH ALLSTON NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC PLAN

Project Update

City of Boston, Thomas M. Menino, Mayor • Boston Redevelopment Authority, Mark Maloney, Director

The vision for Western Avenue includes a new park and a more pedestrian friendly street edge.

BACKGROUND

The North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Plan emerged out of a cooperative effort between Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Harvard University, and the North Allston community in February 2000, in response to a number of recent changes in the area.

Understanding the importance of Harvard University's acquisition of land in North Allston and the mutually beneficial opportunities and challenges that emerge as a result of that acquisition, the City and Harvard agreed to conduct a community-based planning process to ensure that Harvard's expansion creates genuine benefits for the community and the City of Boston.

Harvard's plans for expansion offer both challenges and opportunities for North Allston; the community has advocated for, and Harvard has endorsed, a policy of integrating neighborhood and campus to avoid the "town/gown" separation that characterizes other communitites that host major universities.

In November 2000, Mayor Thomas M. Menino invited members of the existing Harvard University Allston Task Force as well as representatives from resident associations, community organizations, businesses, and others to participate in the Community Planning Group. After a public bid process, the BRA hired Goody, Clancy & Associate in July 2001 to facilitate the Strategic Neighborhood Plan. Over the course of the past year, the Planning Group has worked closely with the BRA, the Boston Transportation Department, other City agencies, elected officials from the state level, Goody, Clancy & Associates and their consultants, and community members to develop a vision for North Allston's future.

WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

A strategic plan is a community-based planning process that establishes a framework and shapes the direction of future development. Understanding both the issues of "where we are now" and the vision of "where we want to go" are key aspects of that process. Beginning with a clear identification and articulation of its current assets, the North Allston community has been able to move forward and consider desirable, realistic goals in such areas as land use and density, transportation, housing, economic development, public realm and urban design.

The vision and planning framework created through this planning effort will inform later, more detailed plans for development in the area as a result of either private sector development or Harvard's institutional master planning.

NEXT STEPS

We encourage and look forward to your input on these proposals.

The following public meetings are open to all who wish to participate and share their thoughts:

September 19, 2002
October 17, 2002
November 14, 2002
December 12, 2002

The meetings will begin at 6:30 with 6:15 registration at the North Allston Library Branch.

Additionally, you can send comments to
Jansi Chandler at the BRA
telephone 617-918-4325
fax 617-376-6087
jansi.chandler.bra@ci.boston.ma.us

NORTH ALLSTON NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC PLAN

in care of
Boston Redevelopment Authority
City Hall
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
Contact Jansi Chandler at the BRA:
• telephone 617-918-4325
• fax 617-367-6087
• jansi.chandler.bra@ci.boston.ma.us
• http://www.gcassoc.com/planning/nallston

GC&A

Next Meeting:
September 19th 6:30pm
Allston Branch Library

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

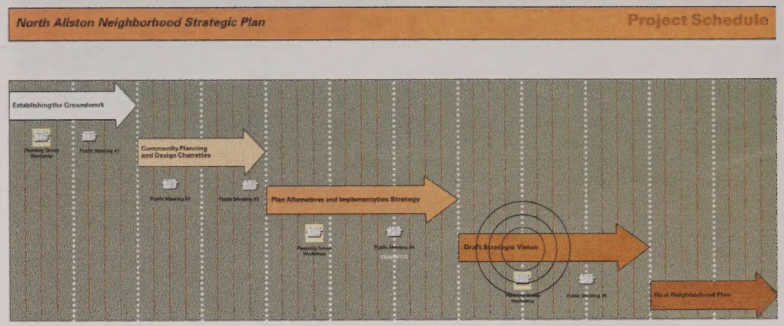
The City agencies and Harvard have committed to work with the community to ensure that this planning effort addresses long-standing as well as new community goals: resolving transportation conflicts between trucks and neighborhoods, providing a wide range of housing opportunities, preserving traditional neighborhoods, maintaining a diverse job base, creating a more pedestrian-friendly Western Avenue, improving access to the river, and similar issues.

THE PROCESS

Over the course of the past 12 months, stakeholders from the community, the City, and Harvard University have worked together to develop a vision for North Allston to guide the creation of a North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Plan. A series of workshops, public meetings and brainstorming sessions mark the key steps in the planning effort, and have been and continue to be critical forums for discussion. At various points, they have focused on:

- **Establishing the groundwork and key planning and development issues to be addressed.**
- **Developing the goals, principles, and interests that will drive the planning effort.**
- **Prioritizing the issues and working through them to develop initial strategies.**
- **Developing a series of possible alternatives and working through each of the scenarios to come to a preferred vision.**
- **Drafting the Neighborhood Plan and guidelines for implementation.**

Over the next four months, we'll be discussing the Draft Strategic Plan. Dialogue is essential, and comments and concerns of all parties continue to guide the process as it moves forward. The dates of the upcoming public meetings are listed on the last page. Meetings are open to all and your participation is highly encouraged.



ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

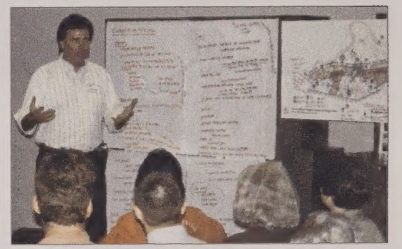
Public meetings have given community members in North Allston the opportunity to bring concerns, interests, and ideas into the planning process. In addition to responding to alternatives presented to them, community members have been helpful in shaping new visions for their neighborhood's tomorrow.

North Allston residents have voiced their ideas and concerns at a number of public meetings.

ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP

The Planning Group was established as the main source through which the BRA, Harvard University and the consultants would receive guidance and feedback from the community. As such, the Planning Group is responsible for listening to, representing and translating the concerns, interests, and ideas of the community-at-large into a plan for the North Allston neighborhood. The Community Planning Group has met frequently throughout the process. The members are:

Ray Mellone, Chair *Harvard University Allston Campus Task Force* *
Robert Alexander *Harvard University Allston Campus Task Force* *
Madeline Amorosi *Boston Public Library – Allston Branch*
Teddy Arvanites *Cambridgeport Bank Executive Office*
Harris Band/Beth Shepard *Harvard Planning and Real Estate*
Paul Berkeley *Allston Civic Association* *
John Bruno *Brighton Board of Trade* *
Jeffrey Bryan *Resident*
Ann Carver *McNamara House*
Paul Creighton *APAC* *
Michael Curran *Brighton Allston Improvement Association* *
Rita DiGesse *St. Anthony's Parish*
Josephine Fiorentino *Charlesview Apartments*
Ann Fladetta *Genzyme Inc.*
Ellin Flood-Murphy *Thomas Gardner School* *
Brian Gibbons *Allston Civic Association* *
Ed Goldman *Channel 38 (UPN)*
Eric Goldstein *Channel 68 (WBPX)*
Buddy Graham *Pepsi-Cola Company of New England*
Michael Hanlon *Brighton Allston Improvement Association* *
Gary Andrew Heart, Pastor *Hill Memorial Baptist Church*
Father Hegarty *St. Anthony's Parish*



Proctor W. Houghton *Houghton Chemical Corporation* *
Paige Kane *CSX*
Shirin Karanfiloglu *Massachusetts Turnpike Authority*
Shaun Keefe *ROMAR*
Bob Hess *CBS Corporation*
Kevin McClusky *Harvard Community Relations*
Catalina Montes *Thomas Gardner School*
David Norton *Channel 2 (WGBH)*
Gus O'Brien *Teacher* *
Kathleen P. Phenix *Joe Smith Community Health Center*
Juan Prieto *Cabot, Cabot & Forbes*
Bob Van Meter *Allston-Brighton Community Development Corporation*
Peoples Bank
Senator Steve Tolman (Will Luzier) *State House*
Representative Brian Golden *State House*
Representative Kevin Honan *State House*
The Late City Councilor Brian Honan (Helena Creamer) *Boston City Hall*
Metropolitan District Commission

* Denotes original Harvard University Allston Campus Task Force Member.

AN EMERGING VISION

The goal of this planning framework is to identify realistic and attainable ways to enhance the area's livability. Over the course of public meetings and workshops that have taken place in the last twelve months, a vision has emerged that translates into broad objectives for a highly livable, human-scaled urban village. The vision emcompasses:

- Housing opportunities affordable to a wide range of people.
- Transportation options that encourage transit use, walking, and bicycle use, and calm traffic in the area's residential neighborhoods.
- Land uses that reinforce the quality of life and character of an urban village.
- Job creation that serves the varying needs of Boston's diverse population.
- Public realm improvements that enhance livability and increase access and visibility to the River and the Harvard campus.
- Stronger partnerships with Harvard that increase educational, cultural, and economic opportunities for the whole community.

A number of these goals – revitalized streetscapes, improved open spaces, strengthened connections to the River, new housing, improved transit, and an enhanced commercial environment – will guide Harvard in its vision for a new Allston campus, and therefore highlight the opportunity for and benefits of partnering between the community and the University.

Vision for public realm improvements on Western Avenue next to Smith Field.

Vision for new housing extending from the library to Allston Landing.

THE STUDY AREA

The Study Area is bounded by the Charles River to the north, the Massachusetts Turnpike to the south, Soldiers Field Road to the east, and Parsons Street to the west. The North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Plan identifies eight focus areas.

The North Allston Study Area and the eight focus areas.

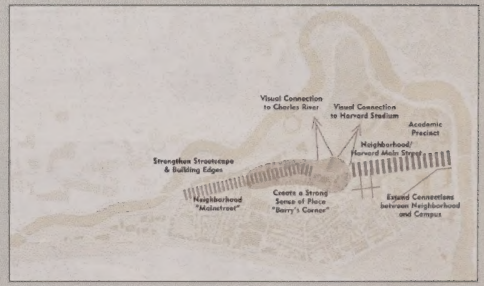
KEY COMPONENTS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

A number of strategies have emerged through the planning process. The following series of diagrams illustrate these strategies, as they have been developed thus far.

STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The Plan proposes to enhance the fabric of the neighborhood through a series of urban design improvements:

- Maintain existing residential scale and uses in and adjacent to neighborhoods.
- Develop streetscape and building edges that will help transform Western Avenue into an identifiable Main Street.
- Preserve view corridors from Barry's Corner to Harvard Stadium and the Charles River.
- Extend connections from the neighborhood into the new Harvard campus.

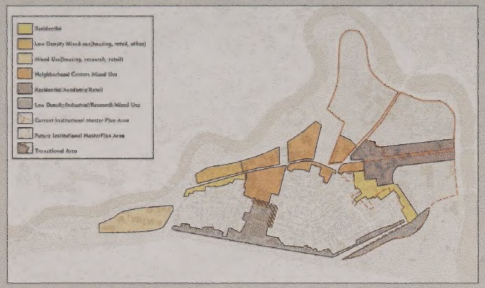


Examples of identifiable Main Streets and pedestrian connections.

ENCOURAGE LAND USE DIVERSITY

Diversity of land use is a critical part of the character of North Allston. The Plan encourages this diversity in new development and envisions a mix of uses in key areas:

- Protect traditional neighborhoods.
- Residential and academic uses along Western Avenue east of North Harvard Street.
- Residential and neighborhood-serving commercial uses to form a community-oriented Main Street along Western Avenue centered at Barry's Corner (Everett Street to North Harvard Street).
- New residential uses extending from the library to Allston Landing.
- New mixed-use district in the triangle of land bound by Leo Birmingham Parkway and Soldier's Field Road.



Possible scenarios for mixed-use development.

ENHANCE THE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

In addition to traffic-calming measures to protect the neighborhood from cut-through traffic, the Plan envisions a series of strategies to improve the existing transportation network:

- Shuttle service to Harvard Square.
- New connections to regional roadways.
- Possible new commuter rail station, high speed bus and other transit connections.
- Possible truck route.

A speed table as an example of a traffic calming measure in residential neighborhoods.

IMPROVE THE PUBLIC REALM

A number of improvements are proposed to increase the overall quality of life in the area:

- Enhance existing open spaces and create a series of small parks throughout the neighborhood.
- Improve physical as well as visual connections along Everett Street from the Mass Pike to the Charles River and along Holten Street between the neighborhoods.
- Make streetscape improvements along Western Avenue and North Harvard Street.
- Capitalize on the proximity of the neighborhood to the Charles River Basin by developing both pedestrian and automobile connections to the river.
- Create pedestrian-friendly community Main Street along Western Avenue.
- Provide the community with visual and pedestrian access to the new Harvard campus.

Examples of public realm improvements.